

Nuclear Plant Decommissioning Act of 2020

Original Sponsors: Senator Sanders and Representative Welch

Original Co-sponsors: Senators Duckworth, Markey, Gillibrand, Leahy, Durbin, King and Warren; and Representative Engel

Communities experiencing the safety and economic impacts of nuclear plant decommissioning deserve a role in shaping those decommissioning plans for nuclear reactors near them. This input is especially critical given the potential for non-operational plants to sit for decades before removal and decontamination. The Nuclear Plant Decommissioning Act of 2020 would transform a process that is weighted almost entirely toward the power plant licensees into one that strikes a reasonable balance between licensees and the impacted communities.

Bill Summary:

The Nuclear Plant Decommissioning Act gives states a meaningful role in the development of reactor decommissioning plans and post-shutdown license transfer decommissioning plans:

- The Act would require licensees to consult with the host state as well as state governments within 50 miles of the plant when drafting a proposed decommissioning plan, also known as a Post Shutdown Decommissioning Activities Report (PSDAR). Plants who may have already finalized a PSDAR would also have to consult with local governments if the license owner wishes to transfer ownership. This consultation would help ensure that state and local concerns are identified and considered.
- The Act would require the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to solicit local public input on the proposed PSDAR or post-decommissioning license transfer before the document is finalized and approved.
- The Act would require the NRC to evaluate and formally adopt or reject the input of the local state, thereby improving accountability and transparency.
- The Act would create several new grant programs to foster communication and information exchange between licensees and communities impacted by plant decommissioning and stranded nuclear waste, and to provide economic assistance to impacted communities.
- If a host state supports the proposed plan or license transfer, the licensee can secure formal NRC approval in an expedited fashion; otherwise the NRC must consider amending the proposed plan based on the host state's recommendations. This incentivizes early collaboration between the licensee and local communities, while ensuring a reasonable balance between them.